

Message Text

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72

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 INR-07 LAB-04

NSAE-00 SIL-01 CU-02 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 L-03 NSC-05

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R 131743Z JUN 75

FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 343

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

USCINCSO

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE TEGUCIGALPA 2530

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, PINT, HO

SUBJECT: STUDENT-WORKER-CAMPESINO DEMONSTRATIONS

1. HONDURAN STUDENTS CELEBRATED NATIONAL STUDENTS' DAY, JUNE 11, WITH SMALL DEMONSTRATIONS IN SAN PEDRO SULA AND TEGUCIGALPA. STUDENT LEADERS CALLED FOR A JUST AGRARIAN REFORM, THE NATIONALIZATION WITHOUT COMPENSATION OF THE AMERICAN FRUIT COMPANIES AND THE END OF AMERICAN INTERFERENCE IN INTERNAL AFFAIRS.

2. AN ORGANIZATION CALLED "THE FRONT FOR THE PRISONERS OF AGRARIAN REFORM" WAS FORMED BY THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC LABOR CONFEDERATION, CGT, AND ITS CAMPESINO AFFILIATE, UNC. THE FRONT'S PRESIDENT IS JULIAN LAGOS, PRESIDENT OF THE CGT. THE GROUP CLAIMS THAT 136 UNC MEMBERS ARE BEING HELD PRISONER BY THE GOH BECAUSE OF THEIR PARTICIPATION IN LAND INVASIONS. DURING THE MORNING OF JUNE 12 THE GROUP BLOCKADED TWELVE KEY BRIDGES IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF HONDURAS TO DRAMATIZE THEIR CAUSE. THERE HAVE BEEN NO REPORTS OF VIOLENCE.

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3. CTH SEC GEN A. VICTOR ARTILES TOLD LABOFF JUNE 11 THAT CHIEF OF STATE MELGAR HAD PROMISED DURING MEETING WITH UNION AND CAMPESINO LEADERS JUNE 10 THAT CAMPESINO PRISONERS WOULD BE RELEASED. TIEMPO OF JUNE 12 ALSO REPORTED MELGAR'S DECISION. NEITHER LAGOS NOR UNC REPRESENTATIVES, 3;34, WERE PRESENT AT THE JUNE 10 MEETING.

4. CGT PRESIDENT LAGOS TOLD LABOFF JUNE 12 THAT OVER 20,000 CAMPESINOS WERE INVOLVED IN GIE OCCUPATION OF THE BRIDGES. (EMBASSY VIEWS THE NUMBER AS EXAGGERATED.) HE SAID THAT THE BRIDGES WOULD BE HELD NO UNTIL THE PRISONERS ARE RELEASED OR UNTIL THERE ARE MORE PRISONERS". HE ADDED THAT IF THEY WERE FORCED OFF THE BRIDGES THAT THEY WOULD TAKE "SOMETHING ELSE" UNTIL THE PRISONERS ARE RELEASED. HE SAID THAT THE CAMPESINOS WERE ACCUSED BY LAND OWNERS OF COMMON CRIMES WHICH THEY HAD ACTUALLY NOT COMMITTED. MELGAR'S ASSURANCES THAT THE PRISONERS WILL BE RELEASED, SAID LAGOS, WERE NOT SUFFICIENT. PRESSURES WOULD BE MAINTAINED UNTIL THE PRISONERS' ACTUAL RELEASE. DURING A RADIO INTERVIEW THE MORNING OF JUNE 13 UNC PRESIDENT PEDRO MENDOZA ALSO SAID THAT PRESSURE WOULD BE APPLIED UNTIL THE PRISONERS ARE FREED.

5. MILITARY SOURCES INFORMED LABOFF AFTERNOON OF JUNE 12 THAT BRIDGES HAD BEEN OPENED.

6. COMMENT: THE ACTION BY THE UNC COMPLICATES AN ALREADY SERIOUS AGRARIAN PROBLEM FACING CHIEF OF STATE MELGAR. THE JAILED CAMPESINOS HAVE FORMAL CHARGES PENDING AGAINST THEM IN THE COURTS AND IN ORDER TO RELEASE THEM ALL MELGAR WOULD HAVE TO SHORT-CUT NORMAL JUDICIAL PROCESS, SOMETHING THAT THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT HAS NOT YET DONE. AND, SINCE IT IS CERTAIN THAT THE INVADING CAMPESINOS IN SOME CASES DID BREAK LAWS, THEIR RELEASE WITHOUT PUNISHMENT WOULD ANGER LAND OWNERS. POSTPONEMENT OF ACTION WOULD PROBABLY CAUSE THE UNC TO ACCELERATE ITS PRESSURES. IN SHORT, MELGAR HAS NO EASY SOLUTION. CIRCUMSTANCE OF UNC PRESSURE WOULD RESULT IN EITHER MORE PRISONERS OR VIOLENCE, THUS CREATING MORE CAMPESINO PRESSURE.
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